

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

RSR-01 /093 W

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R 061630 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0342

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: MINI- GENERAL ELECTION, APRIL 12

1. SUMMARY: ELECTIONS FOR POWERFUL NEW REGIONAL COUNCILS THROUGHOUT ENGLAND AND WALES WILL BE HELD APRIL 12. VOTER TURNOUT IS EXPECTED TO BE LIGHT, AND THE RESULTS, THOUGH PSYCHOLOGICALLY IMPORTANT FOR THE MORALE OF THE TWO MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES, ARE NOT LIKELY TO PROVIDE A SURE GUIDE TO THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION. END SUMMARY

2. ON APRIL 12 ALL THE VOTERS OF ENGLAND AND WALES WILL BE ABLE TO GO TO THE POLLS ON THE SAME DAY FOR THE FIRST TIME OUTSIDE A GENERAL ELECTION. AT STAKE WILL BE THE GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GLC) AS WELL AS THE SIX METROPOLITAN AND FORTY- SEVEN NON- METROPOLITAN

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COUNTY COUNCILS PROVIDED FOR IN THE NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE ESTABLISHED BY PARLIAMENT LAST YEAR. THE COMPREHENSIVE SCALE OF THE ELECTIONS WILL GIVE THE POLITICAL PARTIES A GOOD CHANCE TO EXERCISE THEIR CONSTITUENCY ORGANIZATIONS AND TO TEST THEIR POPULARITY WITH THE ELECTORATE. VOTER APATHY WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, TO EXTRAPOLATE FROM THE RESULTS OF THESE ELECTIONS THE LIKELY OUTCOME OF A GENERAL ELECTION.

3. OF GREATEST INTEREST IN THIS REGARD WILL BE THE GLC WHOSE 92 MEMBERS WILL BE ELECTED BY CONSTITUENCIES THAT HAVE BEEN RE- DRAWN TO COINCIDE WITH WHAT WILL BE THE CONSTITUENCIES OF GREATER LONDON' S 92 MPS IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT. THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE HELD CONTROL OF THE GLC FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS, BUT BOTH THE LABOR AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY HEADQUARTERS HERE EXPECT LABOR TO GAIN A MAJORITY NEXT WEEK. THE LIBERALS, WHO HAVE NOT BEEN REPRESENTED ON THE GLC IN OVER TWENTY YEARS, HAVE VISIONS OF WINNING UP TO SIX SEATS BUT SHOULD BE SATISFIED TO TAKE TWO OR THREE.

4. LABOR EXPECTS TO TAKE ALL SIX OF THE HUGE NEW METROPOLITAN COUNTIES (GREATER MANCHESTER, MERSEYSIDE, SOUTH YORKSHIRE, WEST YORKSHIRE, TYNE AND WEAR, AND WEST MIDLANDS), ALTHOUGH THE LIBERALS HOPE TO DO WELL ENOUGH IN MERSEYSIDE TO GAIN THE BALANCE OF POLITICAL POWER THERE. THE CONSERVATIVES ARE RELYING ON THEIR TRADITIONAL STRENGTH IN RURAL AREAS TO HOLD ON TO A MAXIMUM OF THE NON- METROPOLITAN COUNTIES. THEY STAND TO SUFFER SOME LOSSES EVEN THERE, HOWEVER, SIMPLY BY VIRTUE OF THE INCREASED REPRESENTATION GIVEN TO URBAN COMMUNITIES BY THE 1972 RE- ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

5. CONTROL OF THE NEW COUNTY COUNCILS, ESPECIALLY THE METROPOLITAN ONES, WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL PRIZE IN AND OF ITSELF, BUT BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES WILL ALSO WANT TO DO WELL NEXT WEEK TO OFFSET THEIR RELATIVELY POOR SHOWINGS IN THE LAST SIX BY- ELECTIONS. NONETHELESS, BARRING A GREATER VOTER TURNOUT THAN THE 40 PERCENT NOW EXPECTED, OR A MASSIVE LANDSLIDE ONE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WAY OR THE OTHER, THE RESULTS ARE NOT LIKELY TO PROVIDE

A SURE GUIDE TO THEIR RESPECTIVE PROSPECTS AT THE NEXT
GENERAL ELECTION.

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LONDON04097
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730435/aaahtig.tel
Line Count: 123
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02-Aug-2001 by reddocgw>; APPROVED <29-Aug-2001 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971203
Subject: MINI- GENERAL ELECTION, APRIL 12
TAGS: PINT, UK, PINT
To: BONN
BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN
DUBLIN
EUR
LUXEMBOURG
PARIS

SECSTATE WASHDC

THE HAGUE

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005